

*AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS*

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Canceled)

2. (Currently Amended) ~~The adhesive sheet for microbial testing of claim 1~~ An adhesive sheet for microbial testing, which comprises a substrate, an adhesive layer, and a focusing marker,

wherein the adhesive layer comprises an exposed surface that can be compression-bonded to, and peeled from, a surface of a test article to collect microorganisms and then subjected to image analysis by observation under a microscope or optical equipment with focusing function that utilizes the focusing marker to focus the image of the exposed surface of the adhesive layer,

wherein the substrate and/or or the adhesive layer are/is is a multilayer including a layer comprising -a the focusing marker and a layer free of the focusing marker, and

wherein the focusing marker comprises insoluble particles,

provided that

(a) when the substrate is a multilayer, the layer comprising the focusing marker contacts the adhesive layer, and

(b) when the adhesive layer is a multilayer, the layer comprising the focusing marker contacts the substrate.

3. (Currently Amended) ~~The adhesive sheet for microbial testing of claim 1,~~ An adhesive sheet for microbial testing, which comprises a substrate, an adhesive layer, and a focusing marker,

wherein the adhesive layer comprises an exposed surface that can be compression-bonded to, and peeled from, a surface of a test article to collect microorganisms and then subjected to image analysis by observation under a microscope or optical equipment with

focusing function that utilizes the focusing marker to focus the image of the exposed surface of the adhesive layer,

wherein the focusing marker is provided in the substrate, in the adhesive layer, on a surface of the substrate, or on a surface of the adhesive layer, and

wherein the focusing marker ~~is an~~ consists of insoluble ~~partiele~~ particles with an average particle size of ~~0.2~~ 2.0 to 200  $\mu\text{m}$ .

4. (Currently Amended) The adhesive sheet for microbial testing of claim 2, wherein the focusing marker ~~is an~~ consists of insoluble ~~partiele~~ particles with an average particle size of ~~0.2~~ 2.0 to 200  $\mu\text{m}$ .

5. - 10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) ~~The adhesive sheet for microbial testing of claim 1, An~~ adhesive sheet for microbial testing, which comprises a substrate, an adhesive layer, and a focusing marker,

wherein the adhesive layer comprises an exposed surface that can be compression-bonded to, and peeled from, a surface of a test article to collect microorganisms and then subjected to image analysis by observation under a microscope or optical equipment with focusing function that utilizes the focusing marker to focus the image of the exposed surface of the adhesive layer,

wherein the focusing marker is provided on a surface of the substrate,

wherein the focusing marker ~~on the substrate surface~~ is an undulation pattern of 0.1 to 20  $\mu\text{m}$  depth or a printed pattern with a color variation ~~in the image used for focusing and with a different color from the background color of the field of a microscope or optical equipment with focusing function.~~

12. (Canceled)

13. (Currently Amended) The adhesive sheet of claim 2, wherein the smoothness (difference between concave and convex) of the exposed surface of the adhesive layer of ~~the adhesive sheet for microbial testing~~ is smaller than the depth of the field of the optical system.

14. (Currently Amended) The adhesive sheet of claim 3, wherein the smoothness (difference between concave and convex) of the exposed surface of the adhesive layer of ~~the adhesive sheet for microbial testing~~ is smaller than the depth of the field of the optical system.

15. (Currently Amended) The adhesive sheet of claim 4, wherein the smoothness (difference between concave and convex) of the exposed surface of the adhesive layer of ~~the adhesive sheet for microbial testing~~ is smaller than the depth of the field of the optical system.

16. - 17. (Canceled)

18. (Currently Amended) The adhesive sheet of claim 11, wherein the smoothness (difference between concave and convex) of the exposed surface of the adhesive layer of ~~the adhesive sheet for microbial testing~~ is smaller than the depth of the field of the optical system.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Currently Amended) The kit of claim ~~19~~ 21, wherein the color-developing substance is a fluorescent material.

21. (Currently Amended) ~~The kit of claim 19,~~ A kit for microbial testing, which comprises (1) an aqueous solution comprising one or more kinds of color-developing substances capable of staining a microorganism and (2) an adhesive sheet for microbial testing, which comprises a substrate, an adhesive layer, and a focusing marker,

wherein the adhesive layer comprises an exposed surface that can be compression-bonded to, and peeled from, a surface of a test article to collect microorganisms and then subjected to image analysis by observation under a microscope or optical equipment with focusing function that utilizes the focusing marker to focus the image of the exposed surface of the adhesive layer,

wherein the substrate and/or or the adhesive layer are/is is a multilayer including a layer comprising -a- the focusing marker and a layer free of the focusing marker, and

wherein the focusing marker comprises insoluble particles,

provided that

(a) when the substrate is a multilayer, the layer comprising the focusing marker contacts the adhesive layer, and

(b) when the adhesive layer is a multilayer, the layer comprising the focusing marker contacts the substrate.

22. (Currently Amended) ~~The kit of claim 21,~~ A kit for microbial testing, which comprises (1) an aqueous solution comprising one or more kinds of color-developing substances capable of staining a microorganism and (2) an adhesive sheet for microbial testing, which comprises a substrate, an adhesive layer, and a focusing marker,

wherein the adhesive layer comprises an exposed surface that can be compression-bonded to, and peeled from, a surface of a test article to collect microorganisms and then subjected to image analysis by observation under a microscope or optical equipment with focusing function that utilizes the focusing marker to focus the image of the exposed surface of the adhesive layer,

wherein the focusing marker is provided in the substrate, in the adhesive layer, on a surface of the substrate, or on a surface of the adhesive layer, and

wherein the focusing marker is an consists of insoluble particle particles with an average particle size of 0.2 2.0 to 200  $\mu\text{m}$ .

23. (Currently Amended) ~~The kit of claim 19,~~ A kit for microbial testing, which comprises (1) an aqueous solution comprising one or more kinds of color-developing substances capable of staining a microorganism and (2) an adhesive sheet for microbial testing, which comprises a substrate, an adhesive layer, and a focusing marker,

wherein the adhesive layer comprises an exposed surface that can be compression-bonded to, and peeled from, a surface of a test article to collect microorganisms and then subjected to image analysis by observation under a microscope or optical equipment with

focusing function that utilizes the focusing marker to focus the image of the exposed surface of the adhesive layer,

wherein the focusing marker is provided on a surface of the substrate,

wherein the focusing marker ~~on the substrate surface~~ is an undulation pattern of 0.1 to 20  $\mu\text{m}$  depth or a printed pattern with a color variation ~~in the image used for focusing and with a different color from the background color of the field of a microscope or optical equipment with~~ focusing function.

24. (Currently Amended) The kit of claim ~~19~~ 21, wherein the smoothness (difference between concave and convex) of the exposed surface of the adhesive layer of the adhesive sheet for microbial testing is smaller than the depth of the field of the optical system.

25. (New) A method of testing for microorganisms on a test article, which method comprises

(i) providing an adhesive sheet comprising a substrate, an adhesive layer, and a focusing marker, wherein the adhesive layer comprises an exposed surface, and wherein

(a) the substrate or the adhesive layer is a multilayer including a layer comprising a focusing marker and a layer free of the focusing marker, the focusing marker comprises insoluble particles, provided that (1) when the substrate is a multilayer, the layer comprising the focusing marker contacts the adhesive layer and (2) when the adhesive layer is a multilayer, the layer comprising the focusing marker contacts the substrate,

(b) the focusing marker is provided in the substrate, in the adhesive layer, on a surface of the substrate, or on a surface of the adhesive layer, and the focusing marker consists of insoluble particles with an average particle size of 2.0 to 200  $\mu\text{m}$ , or

(c) the focusing marker is provided on a surface of the substrate, the focusing marker is an undulation pattern of 0.1 to 20  $\mu\text{m}$  depth or a printed pattern with a color variation and with a different color from the background color of the field of a microscope or optical equipment with focusing function,

(ii) compression-bonding the exposed surface of the adhesive sheet to a surface of the test article,

(iii) peeling the adhesive sheet from the surface of the test article, and

(iv) subjecting the exposed surface of the adhesive sheet to image analysis by observation under a microscope or optical equipment with focusing function, wherein the focusing marker is utilized to focus the image of the exposed surface of the adhesive layer,

26. (New) The method of claim 25, wherein the exposed surface is contacted with an aqueous solution comprising one or more kinds of color-developing substances to stain any microorganisms collected on the adhesive sheet.

27. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein the color-developing substance is a fluorescent material.

28. (New) The method of claim 25, wherein the substrate or the adhesive layer is a multilayer including a layer comprising a focusing marker and a layer free of the focusing marker, the focusing marker comprises insoluble particles, provided that (1) when the substrate is a multilayer, the layer comprising the focusing marker contacts the adhesive layer and (2) when the adhesive layer is a multilayer, the layer comprising the focusing marker contacts the substrate.

29. (New) The method of claim 25, wherein the focusing marker is provided in the substrate, in the adhesive layer, on a surface of the substrate, or on a surface of the adhesive layer, and the focusing marker consists of insoluble particles with an average particle size of 2.0 to 200  $\mu\text{m}$ .

30. (New) The method of claim 25, wherein the focusing marker is provided on a surface of the substrate, the focusing marker is an undulation pattern of 0.1 to 20  $\mu\text{m}$  depth or a printed pattern with a color variation and with a different color from the background color of the field of a microscope or optical equipment with focusing function.